

The Empire and Christianity

333

Africa and Italia. Each had his own entourage of minor officials, and the hierarchical principle was observed as rigidly on the lowest rungs of the ladder as on the topmost. Autocrats are obliged to rule through a bureaucracy, a broad-based pyramid of officialdom which usually weighs heavily upon the unfortunate taxpayer who has to support the entire structure.

A similar hierarchy of officials prevailed in the palace and the court, from the grand chamberlain down through a host of Imperial secretaries to the lowly scullion. The tendency of each was to magnify his office into a department, and to be the master of a set of underlings. And it was the policy of Constantine, as it had been the policy of Augustus, to invent new offices in order to increase the number.

Officials who looked to the Emperor as their benefactor.*

In the conduct of State affairs the Emperor was assisted by an Imperial council, known as the consistorium principis. It included the four Praetorian prefects of whom we have spoken; the quaestor of the palace, a kind of general secretary of state; the master of the offices (magister officiorum)^ one of whose principal duties was to act as minister of police; the grand chamberlain (praepositus sacri cubiculi)\ two ministers of finance, and two ministers for war. One of the finance ministers was dignified with the title of count of the sacred largesses (comes sacrarum rationum); the other was count of the private

* See 5. yap **ro**
td\$(De Vita Const., **iv** **1**).